

REMARKS

Claims 1-5, 7-25, and 38-39 are pending in this application, with claims 1 and 9 being the independent claims. Claims 1-4, 7-12, 14-15, 20, 22-25, and 38 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,038,488 to Barnes et al. (“*Barnes*”). Claims 1-4, 7-18, 20-25, and 38 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over PCT Publication No. WO 99/39317 to Alexander et al. (“*Alexander*”) in view of Marcus, “Touch Feedback in Surgery,” *Proceedings of Virtual Reality and Medicine, The Cutting Edge*, September 8-11, 1994, pp. 96-97 (“*Marcus*”). Claims 13 and 14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over *Barnes*.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants appreciate the indication that claims 5, 6, 19, and 20 contain allowable subject matter.

Interview

The undersigned appreciates the courtesies extended during the telephone interview on June 16, 2003. During the interview, Applicants’ representatives proposed amending independent claims 1 and 9 to include the allowable subject matter recited in claim 6. The Examiner agreed that the variation of claim 6 presented herein, if incorporated into the independent claims, would place the independent claims in condition for allowance.

The Claims are Allowable Over Barnes

Independent claim 1 recites “an actuator configured to apply a force to the elongated member, the force being applied to the elongated member as a haptic feedback based on the force signal, the haptic feedback being output when the elongated member is moved a predetermined distance.”

Independent claim 9 recites “an actuator configured to apply a second force to the elongated member in the degree of freedom based on the force signal, the second force being applied when the elongated member is moved a predetermined distance.”

As discussed during the interview conducted on June 16, 2003, claims 1 and 9 are allowable over the *Barnes* reference, as *Barnes* fails to disclose or suggest “an actuator

configured to apply a force to the elongated member, the force being applied to the elongated member as a haptic feedback based on the force signal, the haptic feedback being output when the elongated member is moved a predetermined distance,” as recited in independent claim 1. Similarly, *Barnes* fails to disclose or suggest “an actuator configured to apply a second force to the elongated member in the degree of freedom based on the force signal, the second force being applied when the elongated member is moved a predetermined distance,” as recited in independent claim 9.

Thus, independent claims 1 and 9 are allowable over the *Barnes* reference. Claims 2-5, 7-8, 10-25 and 38-39 depend from the allowable independent claims and are allowable for at least that reason.

The Claims are Allowable Over *Alexander* and *Marcus*

Independent claim 1 recites “an actuator configured to apply a force to the elongated member, the force being applied to the elongated member as a haptic feedback based on the force signal, the haptic feedback being output when the elongated member is moved a predetermined distance.”

Independent claim 9 recites “an actuator configured to apply a second force to the elongated member in the degree of freedom based on the force signal, the second force being applied when the elongated member is moved a predetermined distance.”

As discussed during the interview conducted on June 16, 2003, claims 1 and 9 are allowable over the combination of the *Alexander* and *Marcus* references because the combination fails to disclose or suggest “an actuator configured to apply a force to the elongated member, the force being applied to the elongated member as a haptic feedback based on the force signal, the haptic feedback being output when the elongated member is moved a predetermined distance,” as recited in independent claim 1. Similarly, the combination of *Alexander* and *Marcus* fails to disclose or suggest “an actuator configured to apply a second force to the elongated member in the degree of freedom based on the force signal, the second force being applied when the elongated member is moved a predetermined distance,” as recited in independent claim 9.

Thus, independent claims 1 and 9 are allowable over the combination of the *Alexander* and *Marcus* references. Claims 2-5, 7-8, 10-25 and 38-39 depend from the allowable independent claims and are allowable for at least that reason.

CONCLUSION

All of the stated grounds of objection and rejection have been properly traversed or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding rejections, and that they be withdrawn. Applicants believe that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that further personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Amendment is respectfully requested.

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